ABSTRACT
              Limited financial resources, declining enrollments,
changes in student demographics, calls for accountability, and
collective bargaining have signalled a profound change in the role of
the community college president. The greatest change during the last
20 years is that the decision-making process, once exclusively the
domain of the president, has evolved into a more democratic,
participatory process. Trustees, students, and especially faculty
have begun participating in decision-making. Shared authority and
increasing government regulation mean that the president must now
deal with state legislatures, finance committees, coordinating
boards, and even local constituencies. One drawback of this is that
the president's role has become increasingly political. The community
college president is still very much a leader, but a different kind
of leader. Researchers have concluded that effective presidents, far
from being autonomous and rigid decision-makers, are flexible,
thoughtful, and strong visionaries. Collective bargaining is perhaps
the most significant issue to affect community college leadership in
the past 20 years, and literature on this subject has been almost
unanimously negative. Claims have been made that unionism weakens
administrative control, and that collective bargaining creates
competition rather than cooperation between faculty and
administrators. On the other hand, it is noted that a collective
bargaining contract, which outlines the duties and responsibilities
of faculty, can make faculty more accountable. Since it is unlikely
that faculty will yield its newfound role in governance, community
college presidents must adapt to their new role as managers of the
decision-making process. (ALB)

THE ROLE OF

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT:

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE FROM 1969-89

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Research and Development

Long Beach City College

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THE ROLE OF

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT:

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE FROM 1969-1989

Introduction:

Relevance of Topic to the Politics

and Governance of Higher Education

America's institutions of higher education have faced
many problems and changes in the past twenty years. Limited
financial resources, declining enrollments, changing student
demographics, increased governmental control, calls for
accountability, collective bargaining--these issues and
others have challenged the academic leadership. In
particular, the governance or decision-making process of
these organizations has often been questioned and, as a
result, has changed in various ways. Generally speaking,
the process has been opened up to other groups, especially
the faculty and in some cases the students. These changes
have affected almost everyone in these institutions, but it
may well be the role of the president that has been most
affected.

Nowhere is this more true than in the nation's
community, technical, and junior colleges, the network of
over 1200 institutions that together enroll over half of the
entering college freshmen each year (El-Khawas, Carter, &
Ottinger, 1988, p. xiii). Presidents of the past,

especially those of the 1950's and 1960's were the
"builders," the people who planned and developed these
colleges (Kerr, 1985). New institutions were being built at
the rate of one a week (Rushing, 1976, pp. 5-7); money was
readily available; and presidents were strong, authoritarian
figures who knew what they wanted--and usually got it.

However, since the early 1970's, life has been quite
different for community college presidents. They have had
to deal with financial crises, demands for shared
governance, increasingly militant faculties, collective
bargaining, and a highly politicized environment, both
internally and externally. As a result, there have been
changes in the role of the president in institutional
governance, leadership, and management.

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An Overview of the Literature:

Strengths and Weaknesses

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The changes faced by community college presidents have
been explored in various ways in the literature. Some
research studies, based primarily on surveys and interviews,
have been completed; but for the most part writings on the
subject have been based on personal experience, anecdotal
evidence, reviews of the literature, or combinations of
these kinds of information.

In addition to the lack of actual research, the amount of literature in general is rather scant. A 1984 ERIC review of the literature on community college presidents that had been published between 1976 and 1983 listed only 32 publications (Palmer, pp. 123-4). A 1986 book entitled Key Resources on Community Colleges, a major source of information on these colleges, listed only 12 publications dealing specifically with community college presidents (Cohen, Palmer, & Zwemer). Dale Parnell, the president of the American Association Community and Junior Colleges, writing in the foreword of Vaughan's 1986 major study of community college presidents, decried the lack of research in this field (p. vii).

In contrast, literature on the four-year college president appears to be rather extensive (Kauffman, 1983, p. 229). The question for the community college scholar, then, is to what extent literature relating to the four-year college presidency applies to community colleges. In some cases, authors state explicitly that they are including the community colleges in their writing (Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker, & Riley, 1978; Fisher, 1988; Sharp, 1984), but it is much more common for authors not to indicate if their works apply to community colleges as well as four-year institutions even though the focus is quite clearly on the four-year school (Benezet, 1982; Fisher, 1984; Millett, 1980; Sammartino, 1978; Walker, 1979). Only occasionally do authors clearly and specifically exclude community colleges

from their works (Cohen & March, 1986). Because of the differences between community colleges and four-year institutions, it is often difficult to use this literature to gain insights into the two-year colleges.

Another problem with the literature is that it often discusses the "administration" in general terms without dealing specifically with the president (Eble, 1978; Foresi, 1974; Lombardi, 1979; Moore, Twombly, & Martorana, 1985; Myran, 1983). Thus, it is difficult to extract the findings or comments that are relevant only to the presidency.

These weaknesses in the literature suggest that much more work needs to be done in the area of the commun.ty college presidency. Given the large number of students served by community colleges, and the president's important role in decision-making and institutional leadership, the academic community needs to know more about this topic.

Review of the Literature

As mentioned earlier, publications related to community college presidencies are of two types: actual reseaich studies, and writings based on personal observations and/or literature reviews. The research consists primarily of surveys, interviews, and structured observations, with most of the data being reported in descriptive terms. Studies using statistical methods to analyze data were not found during the course of this review of the literature.

Research Studies

One of the most comprehensive studies of the community college presidency was conducted in 1986 by Vaughan. Based on Career and Lifestyles Surveys completed by nearly 600 presidents, supplemented by almost 100 interviews with presidents, trustees, faculty, administrators, and national community college leaders, Vaughan's study profiled the presidents, their educational and socio-economic backgrounds, their role in governance, their satisfactions and doubts, their stress, even the role of their spouses. This study, which is recognized as one of the central works in the field, revealed that the greatest change in the role of the president during the last 20 years has been in institutional governance, due to the implementation of collective bargaining and faculty demands to be involved in the decision-making process (p. 84). Most colleges have now adopted a shared governance model (pp. 85-86).

The role of the president in the governance process of community colleges has been studied by other researchers as well in the past 20 years, with somewhat mixed results. Gleazer (1973) studied nearly 100 community colleges to determine what trends were emerging. His major finding was that trustees, students, and especially faculty were beginning to participate in decision-making, a trend that was causing a change in presidential authority. This trend was, of course, borne out in Vaughan's 1986 study described

above. However, Reyes and Twomoly (1986-87) interviewed
presidents, deans, instructional chairs, and faculty members
at 11 community colleges regarding their perceptions of
governance at their institutions and found that a
bureaucratic model, with its hierarchy and authoritarian
decision-making process, predominated (pp. 8-10). Perhaps
the difference has to do with the size and composition of
the different samples. Reyes' 11 colleges may not have been
as representative of community colleges in general as the
samples used by Gleazer and Vaughan.

Some researchers have examined the role of presidents
as institutional leaders in an attempt to determine the
extent of their influence in the college. Fisher, Tack, and
Wheeler (1988) obtained data from both two and four-year
college presidents who completed the Fisher/Tack Effective
Leadership Inventory. The results showed that effective
presidents, when compared with typical presidents, are more
distant, more likely to take risks, more thoughtful than
spontaneous, and more flexible than rigid. They are
"strong, action-oriented visionaries who acted out of a kind
of educated intuition" (p. viii-ix). This description
suggests that presidents do exert leadership at their
institutions. An early study by Cohen and Roueche (1969)
focused on the president as educational leader.
Interestingly, the results showed that the president was not
usually assigned responsibility for educational leadership
and that he or she did not typically address educational

leadership issues in his official reports and other pronouncements (pp. 18-19). However, the writings described below, those works that are based on personal observation, do not support this finding.

In an attempt to move beyond opinion and perception, Hammons (1988) used research by Ivery (1983) to describe the actual activities of a community college president. Five presidents were observed for a week, with the results showing that 51% of their time was spent on either receiving or transmitting information. Another 33% of their time was spent on ceremony, scheduling, and traveling, while only 14% was spent on decision-making (planning, deciding, crises, negotiation) (pp. 21-23). The research did not indicate if the institutions studied had a shared governance structure so that there is no way to know from this study if a participatory system requires more or less of a president's time than an authoritarian system. This would be an interesting question to explore in future research.

Personal Observations and Reviews of the Literature

The rest of the literature relating to the community college president in the last 20 years has been written primarily by presidents, administrators, national leaders, or other people associated with these colleges. Their writings are based on their personal experiences, anecdotal evidence, and perceptions, combined with reviews of the

literature, rather than on any research they conducted. The
rest of this paper will summarize these writings but will
also draw on information from the studies cited above, when
appropriate. The first section describes how the role of
the president has changed in general terms; this section is
followed by a discussion of changes in the president's role
in governance, institutional leadership, and management.

The presidents of the past, especially between 1950 and
1970 were quite powerful and autonomous (Alfred, 1984, p. 8;
Alfred & Smydra, 1985, p. 204). However, in the mid-1970's,
the role of the president began changing. Solomon (1976)
saw this change as the president going from a "nuts and
bolts" and "bricks and mortar" person to "a conceptual,
creative, human relations specialist" (p. 93); but others
saw the change in less positive terms. Rushing (1976)
described the new pressures and concerns that community
college presidents would have to face: finance, governance,
lack of public confidence, governmental control, changes in
students (p. 1). Others saw the president's authority and
power declining (Cohen & Brawer, 1982, pp. 110-111, 118).
Alfred (1984) and Alfred and Smydra (1985) discussed the
fact that the president's role became more complex and more
political because of the increased number of "publics"
involved in decision-making: state legislatures,
coordinating boards, the executive branch of state
government, even local constituencies (Alfred, p. 9; Alfred
& Smydra, p. 205).

Much of this writing deals specifically with governance structures and processes. In fact, Cohen and Brawer (1982) state that "more has been written about governance and administration than about any other aspect of the community college" (p. 93). Zoglin (1976) wrote one of the earliest and most definitive works on community college governance. She, too, described how the president's authority was waning (pp. ix-x), and that even though the administrative staff still had "considerable authority" (p. 124), the community college in 1976 was moving toward a decision-making process that gave the faculty more power (p. 112). Other writers have also noted that community college governance in the last 20 years has moved from a bureaucratic model to participatory governance and shared authority (Kintzer, 1980, pp. 4-5; Vaughan, 1986, p. 3).

Even in an institution with shared governance, however, most authors see the president as continuing to play an important role. Foresi (1974) described the president as having the key role in developing consensus within joint decision-making (pp. 24-27). Richardson and Rhodes (1983) stated that shared governance enabled the president to be a leader because through this process the president could use his or her personal credibility to develop others' commitment to the institution (p. 203). Fisher (1984) saw shared governance as facilitating presidential power, but he stressed that the president must retain the final authority

to make decisions, with other groups in the governance process being restricted to making recommendations (pp. 93-94).

One of the more interesting debates about the president's role in the institution has to do with whether the president is seen as a leader or manager, although Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1988) point out that a distinction is made between these two terms only in higher education, not in the corporate sector (p. 49). It was in the 1970's that the terms "manager" and "management" became popular (Kintzer, 1980, p. 2), primarily because of the emphasis at that time on productivity and management by objectives (Richardson & Rhodes, 1985, p. 288). McClenney (1978), a community college president, argued that since community colleges were no longer in a growth mode, management skills were needed to deal with accountability, retrenchment, loss of local control, competition, affirmative action, etc. (p. 26). However, he defined a manager as a "leader," (p. 31) and as "one who plans, organizes, [and] directs, in order to insure the qualitative growth of an exciting institution" (p. 33). This definition sounds very much like Hersey and Blanchard's (1977) definition of leadership: "Leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation" (as quoted by Hall & Alfred, 1985, p. 36).

There does seem to be agreement on the importance of leadership in focusing on the essential purpose of the

institution, that is, its educational mission. It is the
president who keeps everyone in the college focused on its
central purposes and values and goals (Kauffman, 1983, pp.
36-7; McCabe, 1984, p. 49). Vaughan (1978) argued that the
president s pri ary concern should be the educational
process (p. 13). Fisher, Tack, and Wheeler (1988) perhaps
summed it up best when they said, "A president's ability to
provide effective, empowering leadership is the key element
in an institution's success or failure" (p. 65). So, while
there may be some debate over the president being described
as a leader or manager in terms of the institution in
general, when it comes to the educational mission, these
i thors see the president's role as that of a leader, a
person who must be able to use the governance processes and
to juggle the political agendas skillfully enough to enable
the college to fulfill its mission.

Being an educational leader is often difficult, of
course, especially when challenged by collective bargaining,
one of the most significant issues to affect community
colle e leadership in the past 20 years (Rushing, 1976, p.
27). Almost all of the writing on this topic has seen it in
negative terms. Baldridge et al (1976) stated, "Unionism
can weaken the administrative dominance of many two-year
institutions, and those administators can expect major
changes" (p. 156). Collective bargaining "assumes that
faculty and administrators are competitors rather than

colleagues . . . management and labor" (Zoglin, 1976, p.
149). It also forces the president to have a clearly
defined role, thus restricting some of the flexibility
presidents traditionally enjoyed (Rushing 1976, p. 34).
The only positive comment is made by Lombardi (1979) who
noted that a collective bargaining contract can make faculty
more accountable by spelling out their duties and
responsibilities in a legally enforceable document (p. 3).

Conclusion and Implications

The last 20 years have been turbulent times for
community colleges and their presidents. The president has
changed from being an authoritarian figure to being a leader
who must share power in order to be successful. Some
authors argue that the president's authority has been
weakened by shared governance and collective bargaining
while others suggest that the president can still exert
power and influence through strong and visionary leadership.
Only Fisher, Tack, and Wheeler in their 1988 study of
effective presidents, concluded that presidents should not
be particularly concerned with maintaining collegial
relationships (p. 73). This point, which was also stressed
in Fisher's earlier book (1984) on the college presidency,
concerned Vaughan (1986), who argued against what appeared
to be a call for a return to the autocratic president of the

1960's. Vaughan, instead, called for a continued emphasis on participatory governance as the best mode for the ideal president to follow (p. 183).

Undoubtedly there are those who long for a return to "the good old days," when presidents could make decisions without consultation and when there were no questions about who was in charge of colleges. But the history and literature of the last 20 years suggest that these days are over. Community college faculty are not likely to give up their role in institutional governance, nor will they vote to do away with collective bargaining. As a result, community college presidents will continue to share authority through institutional governance processes, but within this shared decision-making structure, they will also be expected to provide the leadership and management necessary to make colleges efficient and effective institutions.

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Annotation: This source is recognized as a
central work in the literature on the community college
presidency. Based on extensive data from surveys and
interviews, this book describes the president in
detail, covering all aspects of his or her life, from

the personal to the professional. Its recency and
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